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Sent by Metro Vancouver on behalf of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness:

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MEDIA RELEASE

4330 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5H 4G8 604-432-6200

3 WAYS TO HOME
Housing, Support, Income

Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

April 8, 2008

PRELIMINARY NUMBERS FROM 2008 INDICATE HOMELESSNESS CONTINUES TO INCREASE THROUGHOUT METRO VANCOUVER

Preliminary numbers from the 2008 Homeless Count, conducted by the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, indicate that homelessness continues to be an issue throughout the region. All sub-regions in Metro Vancouver found more homeless individuals in comparison to 2005 Count results.

A 24-hour snapshot count conducted on March 11th, 2008 indicates that 2,592 individuals were found to be homeless in the Metro Vancouver region. This number is an increase of 427 individuals over the 2005 count data, or an increase of 19% over the number of homeless individuals found in 2005, and a jump of 131% since 2002.

"Some may be surprised that the numbers of homeless we found increased by only 19% over 2005, because they see so many more homeless people on the streets. However, if you just look at the homeless counted on the street and at service (street/service) locations, the numbers increase by 37%. This may be why homelessness is more visible than three years ago" said Robyn Newton, Homeless Count project manager with SPARC BC.

Geographic area coverage by volunteers for the 2008 Homeless Count was improved over previous counts, allowing for a more reliable count of homeless individuals in the region. Homeless counts, however, are by their very nature an undercount. The assistance of local homelessness planning tables, numerous service organizations, local outreach workers, RCMP, by-law officers and others has led to a substantial increase in our knowledge of where homeless individuals may be located or gather.

"We were able to get much more accurate numbers in the suburbs, where previously there had been denial that the problem existed outside the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver" said Alice Sundberg, Co-chair of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

The data from the 2008 Homeless Count provides updated information on the homeless population in communities throughout our region. A full analysis of the data is being completed by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) and is anticipated to be released in September of this year. Preliminary numbers and the full data analysis provide all three levels of government, service providers and the public the information needed to move forward in addressing the issue of homelessness.

The RSCH is made up of community based organizations and all levels of government working to address homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region. After eight years of sustained collaboration, the RSCH has demonstrated that all three levels of government can work side by side with community groups to achieve results.

The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) in their Regional Homelessness Plan, Three Ways to Home outlines the three solutions to homelessness; affordable housing, adequate income and support services as needed.

Data tables for the preliminary results of the 2008 Homeless Count can be found at www.metrovancouver.org.

Funding for the 2008 Homeless Count has been provided by the Government of Canada through the Homelessness Partnership Initiative funding, United Way of the Lower Mainland, and Vancouver Foundation.

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For information:
Judy Robertson
Corporate Relations
604-432-6205